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JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the comments of the Joint Inspection Unit on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi (A/51/803).

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ANNEX

Comments of the Joint Inspection Unit on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi

1. The report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi (A/51/803, annex) is based on two field audits in May and November 1996. "The primary objective of the audits was to assess the operational and administrative procedures of the operation and to evaluate the extent to which the operation had achieved its stated functions." The report seeks to provide insight into the effectiveness and efficiency of the functions carried out by the Logistics Base.

2. It is necessary at the beginning to recapitulate the principal functions of the Logistics Base as stipulated in the report of the Secretary-General on the management of peacekeeping assets (A/50/907), namely:

(a) To receive, inspect repair and store surplus assets from closing or downsizing missions;

(b) To maintain a reserve of equipment in the form of start-up kits.

3. For the Joint Inspection Unit to comment on the Office of Internal Oversight Services report it was recognized that while the focus of the report was on the Logistics Base, it had to be studied within the framework of managing peacekeeping operations as a whole. The linkage between closing or downsizing missions, the Logistics Base and the overall responsibility of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in planning, coordination and management had to be looked at.

4. The report submits a number of recommendations emanating from their audits and inspections of the Logistics Base. In certain instances it seems to the Joint Inspection Unit that the Office of Internal Oversight Services: (a) did not follow its findings and recommendations to their logical conclusion; and (b) did not explicitly attempt to link the situation in the base and its functioning to that of the closed or downsized missions and above all to the role of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations as the responsible overseer of all operations. The Unit therefore submits the following observations.

5. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations does not seem to have the proper plans guidelines and monitoring and control system in place and at the two ends of transactions, i.e., the closing and downsizing missions on the one hand and the Logistics Base on the other.

6. It transpires from the report that a number of shortcomings exist at closing or downsizing missions, including that of assessment and technical evaluation of equipment to be shipped to the Logistics Base and the absence of an accurate inventory. How decisions are taken and by whom is not clear. Why is equipment shipped that is not going to be used? What type and quality of equipment are judged to be useful for other missions? What parts are shipped?

Under what conditions are they shipped? What is done with equipment that is not shipped? How are these questions and issues clarified? What are the costs involved? Detailed questions like these and decisions to be taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the time of the closing or downsizing of missions are very important for the next stage in the operation, i.e., the Logistics Base.

7. Although difficulties connected with the initial trial period and the piling-up of consignments from closing missions have to be taken into consideration, the report shows deficiencies in handling the functions entrusted to the Logistics Base not only because of problems emanating from the closing or downsizing missions but also because of the situation in the Logistics Base itself, including incorrect inventory data, discrepancies in quantities reported, reductions in write-offs, deficiencies in technical evaluations of equipment and storage and other problems. The report also underlines the fact that lack of both human and financial resources were a major constraining factor.

8. The role of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in all this is not stated succinctly. The Joint Inspection Unit does not detect in the report a direction for more effective and efficient management, including better guidelines and a more realistic concept of the ingredients needed for start-up kits.

9. The Joint Inspection Unit wonders whether it would be feasible to have a small deployable technical/administrative team within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations that would be qualified to handle all the tasks entrusted to it, to make decisions on equipment to be shipped or to be disposed of from closing or downsizing missions and to take all the steps necessary. The team could also assist the Logistics Base and would assume overall responsibility for such operations but with delegation of authority, responsibility and accountability to the field.

10. In his note dated 20 February 1997 transmitting the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to the General Assembly (A/51/803), the Secretary-General "notes that measures have been taken or initiated to correct many of the issues addressed in the review and concurs with the recommendations contained in the report". The Joint Inspection Unit would be interested to know of these measures and the implementation of the recommendations, including how the Secretariat dealt with the losses reported. This, together with an assessment of the present situation, may call for a follow-up report.

11. In pointing to the deficiencies noted in paragraphs 5 to 8 above, the Joint Inspection Unit recognizes the contributions made by the host country to the Logistics Base to ameliorate the situation. It also concurs with the finding that one of the major problems is the lack of resources, both human and financial. The Joint Inspection Unit believes that this has to be rectified.